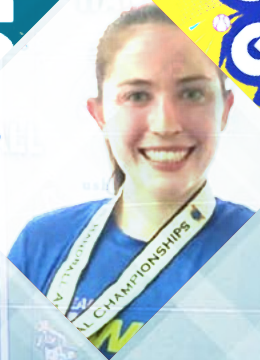


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FOR NEWS, VIDEOS AND FIXTURES www.gaa.ie



By Cian Murphy

KENNY: GO GAMES ENSURE NO CHILD IS LEFT BEHIND



GAA GO GAMES HAS BEEN A HUGELY SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMME DESIGNED TO INCREASE PARTICIPATION.

CHILDREN SHOULD NOT BE TURNED AWAY FROM GAELIC GAMES BECAUSE THEY DO NOT GET A CHANCE TO PLAY.

That's the message from GAA head of participation Seamus Kenny who has welcomed the scrutiny on the GAA Go Games policy which has erupted in recent weeks.

The purpose of Go Games since it was launched nearly 20 years ago is that every child gets a go. There has been criticism in some opposition quarters that children should be exposed to full competition earlier rather than later.

But for former Meath senior football captain Seamus Kenny, he believes the debate it has provoked around when serious competition should be applied to young people is good for the Association. Seamus told the GAA Club Newsletter: "This is not a new policy, and it has been a collaborated approach by the GAA, the LGFA and Camogie Association.

"The simple message is that under no circumstances should anyone be left behind. There is scope for everyone to get a game no matter what the numbers. Whether a team has five, 10 or 15 players there are ample opportunities to set up where everyone gets a game.

"The philosophy of Go Games is everyone gets a Go, everyone gets a game. The mission of the GAA is that as many as possible are involved for as long as possible. We want to keep everyone there.

"Some young players might have limited ability and might not play at a high level when they get older but there is a place for everyone in the GAA. Why would you turn kids away? We do not want to see that. "Go Games has been hugely successful for the GAA and the majority of coaches understand what we are trying to achieve. We have 133,000 children involved between the ages of 6 and 11."

So, what's the problem? Why the fuss?

In short, Croke Park have reissued the guidelines on underage development and the fact that it should be developmental and not fixated on cups and medals because of a number of instances where clubs have been hosting blitzes and tournaments and so called All-Irelands aimed not at the majority of players but an elite few.

Participating clubs are being told there is a cap on numbers when they enter which results in players being left out and left behind. At a time when the GAA has more than 250,000 juvenile members registered, the Association is acting now to nip this elitism as it flies in the face of best

GAA HEAD OF PARTICIPATION SEAMUS KENNY IS A FORMER MEATH SFC CAPTAIN AND A MEMBER OF SIMONSTOWN GAELS



practice.

It is also the cause of deep unease among parents according to a recent survey. "We know from a survey released late last year that in 30 of the 32 counties the lack of playing time for children was the main complaint or breach of the Code of Behaviour (Underage) that our clubs received."

"There is empirical evidence that small-sided games with high number of touches of the ball or sliotar benefits their development. Kids have different shapes,

sizes and abilities and we need to give them all an opportunity to develop.

"The different maturation of players means we need to have scope for development rather than close it off so that some players may never come through because we focused on the elite players at juvenile level.

"This is not an attack on competitiveness. Kids are naturally competitive and there are ways to harness that and encourage players. It just should not come at a cost

with that cost being to the detriment of players".

"This debate is good to have. Some people do not agree and think their child or players will develop in an ultra-competitive environment. But we want the message to go out that best practice is for clubs to stick to the Go Games policy of small-sided games with no preoccupation on scores or cups or trophies."

Go Games of small-sided games with young referees runs from ages 6-11 and then at U12 level there are leagues but with no finals or cups or medals. At U13 then clubs have grading games before sorting teams into leagues that are streamed on ability. There are sanctions and penalties for non-compliance, but Kenny believes that this should not be necessary if coaches are aware of the principles of best practice. The Go Games policy can be found at:

<https://www.gaa.ie/my-gaa/getting-involved/go-games>



FOR THE ELECTRIC IRELAND MINOR HURLING AND ONEILLS.COM U20 HURLING TITLES, UACHTARÁN CLG LARRY MCCARTHY ALSO ADDRESSED THE ISSUE AND SAID:

"There has been much talk lately about what sort of competitive environment we want in Gaelic Games. Contrary to some of the criticism, our Association is not the enemy of competitive spirit. Far from it and today's action will bear testament to that. What we are the enemy of is people who are at odds with our mantra of a GAA Where We All Belong and where as many as possible play and are involved for as long as possible.

"Juvenile coaches who act out their own sporting fantasies vicariously through children and who believe that a win at all costs mentality and pursuing elitist rather than inclusive approaches to developing players do the GAA a disservice. Young players won't always remember what their coach said to them. But they will always remember how they made them feel. Competition is healthy and today we will see outstanding young talent who epitomise the best of the next generation of hurlers. But what is unhealthy is an approach to nurturing young talent that is short sighted, narrow minded and does not take into account the fact that no two people are the same nor do they acquire skills or develop at the same rate."

By Cian Murphy & Cian O'Connell

KNOW YOUR BAS – NEW HURLEY REGULATIONS

NEW REGULATIONS HAVE BEEN PASSED BY THE GAA REGARDING THE PERMITTED SHAPE OF THE BAS IN HURLING. HOWEVER, THIS WILL NOT LEAD TO A GENERAL ORDER TO GET RID OF HURLEYS THAT ARE CURRENTLY BEING USED.

Instead, Pat Daly of the Hurley and Sliotar Regulation Work Group says that the regulations will be implemented over the coming years in line with new licensees in hurley manufacture and so there is no need for hurlers to panic.

Previous generations of hurlers would on occasion have had the shape of their hurl measured against a special implement to ensure that the bas was not too big. The new dimensions passed for the shape of a bas last month have been driven by an acknowledgement that the dimensions in the rule book had not been enforced and that modern hurls (or hurleys depending on your county) were operating outside of regulation and that the rule book needed to reflect this.

This prompted speculation as to how this would be enforced. For example, would hurling match referees carry out pre-game checks similar to soccer where a referee can ask to check the studs of players. However, this sort of scare mongering has been dismissed by Pat Daly.

He told the Club Newsletter: “Checking hurleys like that in a dressing room is not envisaged because by the time you get to match day it is too late.

“There won’t be a requirement to get rid



NEW HURLEY REGULATIONS WILL BE IMPLEMENTED OVER TIME

of hurleys.

“What will happen is that as a result of Ash Dieback Disease, you will see more and more alternative materials being used. Similar to what has happened around the regulations for a sliotar and how manufacturers must meet criteria to be an official licensee, it is anticipated that there will be a comparable system for Hurley Licensees.

“In baseball currently there are wooden bats and aluminum bats and other materials. However, some competitions like Major League Baseball only permit wooden bats to be used,” he said.

The success of the smart sliotar licensee process provides the template for a similar approach to be made for the regulation of hurley manufacture.

Research shows that some of the best-known manufacturers have by their own admission been making hurleys with a larger bas greater than the permitted size since the late 90s.

The stick has undergone a dramatic transformation since the new millennium. The demise of ground hurling now because of the possession-based approach to the game has driven players towards a hurl with a bigger bas because their preference is to always lift and strike – this has also made some players opt for shorter hurls to avoid being hooked as they do not need the length to make a ground stroke.

At a May meeting of GAA Central Council hurley dimensions as recommended by the

Sliotar & Hurley Regulation Work Group were approved.

The following was agreed regarding hurley dimensions:

- Juvenile (Child) up to and including 26" Hurley - Maximum Bas of 15cm
- Junior (Youth) up to and including 30" Hurley - Maximum bas of 16cm
- Senior (Adult) 30" up to and including 36" Hurley - Maximum bas of 17cm
- Adult Goalkeeper Hurley maximum bas size of 21cm

GAA Director of Organisational Culture, Planning & Development (DOCPD) Pat Daly is part of the group and explains the rationale behind the recommendations.

"The rulebook is nearly silent on hurley specifications, the only thing it says is that the bas can be no more than 13cms at its widest point," Daly says. "That is the only thing in the rulebook at the moment.

"In a sense that was always conditional that hurleys would be made of ash. Regarding the 13cms it has been evolving and changing, it wasn't being adhered to as the bas' were significantly bigger than the 13cms stipulated in rule.

"There was no point in having a rule that wasn't being adhered to and was effectively out of date." Daly believes clarity is now provided.

"Apart from stating that the bas of the hurley shall not be no more than 13cm at its widest point, the rulebook contains no other detail in relation to the hurley specification.

"As this has not been the case for some, change is required as there is little point in having a playing rule, which is not being adhered to.

"It's also important, in a change management context, that the amended rule is configured to address the fact that

hurleys are increasingly being made from materials – other than ash – because of the spread of ash dieback disease."

The Sliotar & Hurley Regulation is vital according to Daly. "To be honest it is probably more than hurley and sliotar regulation workgroup in that it is trying to proactively address hurling in its broadest

context," Daly says. "The regulation around hurleys, helmets, and sliotars is crucial - they are the fundamentals.

"From the introduction of the yellow sliotar in 2019 to the smart sliotar at U20 last year, on to the smart sliotar at adult senior level and U20 level. It has been an iterative process.

"We have tried to do things in the most effective way we can, we are trying to change to a culture of compliance."

The GAA will be working with the Department of Technical Engineering to ensure that matters are progressed in the most applied and scientific manner possible.



By Cian O'Connell

VOLUNTEERS AND PLAYERS MUST BE PROTECTED SAYS GAA PRESIDENT LARRY MCCARTHY

GAA PRESIDENT LARRY MCCARTHY SAYS LEGISLATION TO PUNISH SEVERE, PERSONAL, AND EXCESSIVE CRITICISM OF AMATEUR ATHLETES AND VOLUNTEERS SHOULD BE EXPLORED.

One of the topics McCarthy spoke about at Seanad Éireann was the issue of social media abuse.

"There is, to use the words of US sports commentator Bob Costas, "a corrosive assault on civility" taking place in relation to sport and sports people through the medium of social media," he remarked. "Maybe through mainstream media as well, but less so.

"It should be realised that what one says matters, what one writes matters, what one puts in the public domain matters.

"By all means let people express an opinion, but let it be done in a manner that is respectful. The abuse that many players, volunteers and officials have been subjected to in recent years is absolutely unacceptable.

"Let us stop the cowardly attacks on people who are volunteering their time and talent for the betterment of society. Let us stop the unwarranted assaults on people's characters and the nefarious condemnations of amateur sports people."

Volunteers and players must be protected according to McCarthy.

"The question becomes what can the GAA as an Association do about it?," he adds.



UACHTARÁN CHUMANN LÚTHCHLEAS GAEL LARRY MCCARTHY.

"Given that we are at heart a sport organisation, I believe that a protection of amateur athletes and officials, in particular GAA, LGFA and Camogie players, through legislation should be investigated.

"The legislation would penalise severe, personal, and excessive criticism of amateur athletes and volunteers.

"A Protection of Volunteers in Amateur Sport Act might be considered by the Oireachtas Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media.

"This could entail the design and implementation of a means to initially identify, and then penalise, people who

abuse amateur athletes and volunteer sport officials. One might ask why only amateurs?

"Amateur athletes and officials return to their communities and are back at work shortly after their games, and, unlike professional athletes, are not the beneficiaries of practiced support when they are the focus of such criticism.

"The very nature of amateur sport suggests that they are the most vulnerable.

"I acknowledge the difficulty involved in the identification process, and that there may be a fundamental peril in the

danger of restricting speech in a democratic society.

"But is Irish society at a point where a formal, legislated, deterrent of social media abuse is warranted?

"Is the amateur player and official, and by extension the amateur ethos of the GAA, LGFA and Camogie Association, worth protecting, in a form that will prevent the continuation of abuse?

"Could abuse in online forums be treated in the same way that misinformation about political events has been? Without knowing the technicalities of the process, it is at least worth consideration at a formal level."

By Cian O'Connell

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT VITAL TO ASSIST INTEGRATION PROCESS

UACHTARÁN CHUMANN LÚTHCHLEAS GAEL LARRY MCCARTHY.



GAA PRESIDENT LARRY MCCARTHY SAYS PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT WILL BE REQUIRED TO ASSIST THE PROCESS OF INTEGRATION.

A steering group on integration, chaired by Iar-Uachtarán na hÉireann, Mary McAleese, features representatives from the GAA, Ladies Football, and Camogie Associations.

Speaking at Seanad Éireann, Larry McCarthy outlined some of the challenges that exist.

“Pitches, and green spaces are also key to our health and well being as a society,” he says.

“Green spaces and sports facilities are often described as the lungs that communities, particularly urban communities, use to breathe.

“Without them one can see how communities may feel starved of that oxygen, not just in a physical sense, but in a community sense as well.

“Think of Ballymun without Setanta Hurling Club, or Shantalla without St. Michael’s, or Blackpool without The Glen.

“We are facing a continuous challenge of providing pitches for our urban clubs, a challenge that will grow exponentially once we integrate.

“We need the collective will and cooperation of planners, local authorities, politicians, and sport organisations to ensure that our communities are provided with the green space that is necessary for them to be able to play.

“Be assured that any public investment that is made in facilities for either of our three Associations will be returned in spades as we are, collectively, the best community-based organisations in the world.

“I have no hesitation in saying that the Return On Investment in facilities for each of our associations will far exceed expectations.”

The GAA President highlighted the University of Galway Connacht GAA Air Dome as an example of what can be provided.

“The largest sports dome in the world is located at the Connacht Centre of Excellence in Ballyhaunis,” he added.

“It is a magnificent facility and wonderful addition to the list of facilities that we have provided to our communities.

“It is in continuous use and allows games to be played in all sorts of weather. From Sept 1, 2022 to yesterday, April 25, 2023, 104,000 people have used the Dome in one capacity or another.

“It cost, dare I say, it only cost, €3.2 million to construct and the majority of the funding came from the Connacht Council.

“There was a public contribution to the costs, but even if there wasn’t, back of the envelope calculations on the basis of recent use will certainly support the contention that the Return On Investment is very significant.”

Larry McCarthy is hopeful similar venues can be constructed in the other provinces.

“The potential benefit of indoor facilities with a usage rate similar to Ballyhaunis suggests that we should research locations in other provinces that would be within a maximum 90-minute drive, and preferably within a one-hour drive, of the majority of our clubs,” he says.

“Publicly funded domes are worthy of analysis as a partial solution to the challenge of facilities in One Association, because that challenge cannot be overcome in isolation by the three Associations.

“Public infrastructure investment will be needed.

“While the challenges are numerous and varied, rest assured that the three Gaelic Games Associations are intent on meeting them and ultimately integrating.”

GAA TO TRIAL EXPERIMENTAL KICK-OUT AND FREE-KICK RULES



DUBLIN GOALKEEPER STEPHEN CLUXTON TAKES A KICK-OUT DURING THE LEINSTER GAA FOOTBALL SENIOR CHAMPIONSHIP FINAL MATCH BETWEEN DUBLIN AND LOUTH AT CROKE PARK IN DUBLIN.

THE GAA WILL TRIAL ALTERNATIVE RULES RELATING TO THE KICK-OUT, FREE-KICKS, SIDELINE KICKS, AND FREE KICKS AWARDED FOR A MARK DURING THE FORTHCOMING HIGHER EDUCATION FRESHERS 1 HURLING COMPETITION LATER THIS YEAR.

The proposed trial rule relating the kick-out would require it to travel beyond the near 45 yard line before a team-mate of the goalkeeper who kicked it could play the ball.

The proposed rule relating to free-kicks, sideline kicks, and free kicks awarded for a mark would prohibit players from kicking the ball backwards between the two 20 metre lines.

The two proposed trial playing rules can be read in full below.

Proposed Playing Rules for Trialling in H.E. Freshers 1 Football and Hurling Competitions 2023

Gaelic Football Playing Rules:

1. Kick-Out in Football to Travel Outside the near 45m. Line.

(i) Amend Rule 2.7 (a), Set Play (Football) to read:

“The ball shall travel outside the near 45m. line before being played by another player of the defending team”.

(ii) Amend Rule 4.29 -Technical Fouls (Football) to read:

“For another player on the team taking the puck-out to play the ball before it has travelled outside the near 45m line”.

Penalty

(i) Cancel kick-out

(ii) Throw-in the ball on defenders’ 20m line in front of the scoring space.

2. Prohibition on Playing a Free Kick, Side-line Kick or Free Kick awarded for a Mark backwards between the two 20m.lines.

(i) Amend Rule 2.5 Set Play (Football) by adding:

“A free kick shall not be played backwards between the two 20m lines”.

(ii) Amend Rule 2.9 Set Play (Football) by adding after the first sentence:

“The side-line kick shall not be played backwards between the two 20m. lines”.

(iii) Amend Rule 2.12 (a) Set Play (Football) by adding after the first sentence:

“A free-kick taken for award of a Mark shall not be played backwards between the two 20m. lines”.

(iv) Amend Rule 4.25 -Technical Fouls (Football) by adding:

(c) To play the ball backwards from a free-kick, side-line kick or free-kick awarded for a Mark between the two

20m. lines”.

Penalty

(i) Cancel the free Kick, side-line kick or a free kick awarded for a Mark.

(ii) Throw-In the ball where the foul occurred.

by John Harrington

GAA TO TRIAL ALTERNATIVE HURLING HANDPASS RULE

THE GAA WILL TRIAL AN ALTERNATIVE RULE RELATING TO THE HANDPASS IN HURLING DURING THE FORTHCOMING HIGHER EDUCATION FRESHERS 1 HURLING COMPETITION LATER THIS YEAR.

This is the result of a close examination of the unlawful use of the handpass in hurling by the Standing Committee on Playing Rules.

The SCPR established a sub-committee and tasked it to consider solutions.

The wording of the proposed handpass trial put forward by the sub-committee is as follows:

1. Amend Rule 1.7 (b) Rules of Fair Play (Hurling) to read:

(b) Released from the holding - hand and struck with a definite striking action of a hand, either by:

(i) The other hand

Or

(ii) Tapping the ball on the hurley and striking the ball with either hand.

The process of striking the ball with the non-original holding hand involves the transferring of the hurley from one hand to the other.

2. Amend Definition 10 Hand Pass (b) Hurling to read:

(b) Hurling

CATHAL DUNBAR OF WEXFORD DURING THE ALLIANZ HURLING LEAGUE DIVISION 1 GROUP A MATCH BETWEEN CORK AND WEXFORD AT PÁIRC UÍ CHAOIMH IN CORK.

The ball shall be released from the holding-hand and struck with a definite striking action of a hand by, either by:

(i) The other hand

Or

(ii) Tapping the ball on the hurley and striking the ball with either hand.

3. Amend Rule 4.2 (b), Rules of Foul Play (Hurling) by adding:

“As specified in Rule 1.7 (b) Rules of Fair Play (Hurling)”.

The process of striking the ball with the non-original holding-hand involves the transferring the hurley from one hand to the other.



The GAA will also trial a second experimental hurling playing rule during the forthcoming Higher Education Freshers 1 hurling competition that will require all puck-outs to travel past the a team's own '45 yard line, that is the '45 nearest the goalkeeper taking the puck-out.

The wording of the proposed puck-out trial is as follows.

(i) Amend Rule 2.6 - Set Play (Hurling) by amending the final sentence to read:

“The ball shall travel outside the near 45m. line before being played by another player of the defending team”.

(ii) Amend Rule 4.29, Rules of Foul Play (Hurling) to read:

“For another player on the team taking the puck-out to play the ball before it has travelled outside the near 45m.

line”.

Penalty

(i) Cancel puck-out.

(ii) Throw In the ball on defenders' 20m. line opposite the scoring space.

(iii) Amend Rule 1.2(i), Rules of Specification, by deleting the word “(Football)” in the first line.

(This provides for the marking of a 45m. line in Hurling.)



TIPPERARY GOALKEEPER BARRY HOGAN IN ALLIANZ HURLING LEAGUE ACTION.

'IT'S ANYONE'S GAME' - SHARE YOUR HURLING STORY

IT'S ANYONE'S GAME FORMS PART OF BORD GÁIS ENERGY'S ONGOING COMMITMENT TO USING ITS HIGH-PROFILE SPONSORSHIP TO CHAMPION HURLING ACROSS THE COUNTRY, PROMOTE POSITIVE DISCUSSION AROUND INCLUSIVITY AND DEMONSTRATE THAT HURLING IS A PLACE FOR EVERYONE.

To do this, they have once again teamed up with hurling legend Joe Canning and Limerick hurler Gearóid Hegarty to launch this campaign.

Other high-profile personalities taking part in the initiative include activist and sports journalist Joanne O'Riordan, former Leitrim hurler Zak Moradi and former Cork hurler Seán Óg Ó hAilpín.

As part of the campaign, Bord Gáis Energy have also launched a competition to uncover and shine a light on personal stories from across the country celebrating diversity and inclusivity within the game. Each week, you're invited to share your 'It's Anyone's Game' story via WhatsApp. You can tell your story using voice notes or in text form. It's up to you. Just start thinking of all your hurling stories and anecdotes – we all really want to hear from you.

The competition is open now and runs until Friday 30 June with weekly prizes to include match tickets and a signed jersey. And one lucky overall winner selected at random from all weekly winners will also win coveted tickets to the All-Ireland Final. Winning entries will also be promoted by the team at Off The Ball on their weekly hurling POD.

To enter simply 'WhatsApp' 086 786 9642 by text message or voice note and share your hurling story and why you believe hurling is anyone's game. For more detail, see [here](#) and full terms and conditions, see [here](#)



CLUB NOTES



HAVE YOUR SAY ON GAA ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

Next year marks the 140th anniversary of the foundation of the GAA in 1884.

As part of the events that will mark this significant milestone, the Association plans to hold a Lá na gClub that will be marked by the 1,600 clubs throughout Ireland and the near 500 in existence in World GAA.

To agree on this date all clubs will shortly receive a survey request from the GAA Community and Health team in Croke Park to indicate their preferred choice of date. The dates for Lá na gClub 2024 currently being considered are:

Easter Monday, April 1
May Bank Holiday Monday
Weekend of August 26/27

October Bank Holiday Monday
Clubs should keep an eye out for the survey and make sure your voice is heard and help plan a significant national and international event that celebrates the existence of the GAA and the promotion of Gaelic Games.

GOING GREEN

This July 15th will be an occasion for Croke Park and the GAA to showcase its commitment to sustainability. On what will be the Tailteann Cup final day and an All-Ireland football semi-final, the stadium will use the opportunity to highlight its numerous initiatives and investments in green energy and sustainability. For example, all food sold in Croke Park is sourced from within a 50km radius of the stadium.

GAA REPRESENTATIVES MEET WITH VICTIMS' CAMPAIGN GROUP

GAA representatives from national and provincial level have held constructive talks with the South East Fermanagh Foundation (SEFF), a campaign group which represents the interest of those who have suffered at the hands of Loyalist and Republican violence across the island.

Ulster GAA CEO/Provincial Secretary Brian McAvoy, Ulster GAA Head of Community Development Diarmaid Marsden and the GAA's Director of Communications Alan Milton met with SEFF Director Kenny Donaldson and his colleagues Karen McKeever and Sammy Heenan at the meeting in Armagh.

During the meeting the SEFF delegates were provided with an overview of the numerous cross-community initiatives that the GAA is presently engaged with and they acknowledged the positive community contribution made by the GAA.

They also expressed concerns about the actions of a small minority of supporters at a number of Ulster Championship games this year and on the wider issue of GAA memorials.

Speaking after the meeting, Brian McAvoy said:

"It was a humbling experience to meet with the SEFF representatives and hear their personal testimonies. They stressed that they are a support group for victims, irrespective of creed, gender or ethnicity.

"The group pointed out that what might

be seen as banter by some, such as the signing of a line from the song 'Celtic Symphony', is interpreted as a glorification of terrorism by some victims and causes undue hurt to them."

The GAA representatives stressed that the Association was both a sporting and cultural organisation, with a clear and unambiguous anti-sectarian and anti-racist ethos. Both parties agreed to continue their engagement going forward.

SPECSAVERS CELEBRATES FIRST YEAR OF SUCCESSFUL SOCIAL INITIATIVE

Following the first successful year of Specsavers Social Initiative within GAA communities, Specsavers are thrilled to highlight the positive impact that the



initiative has had on local communities across Ireland. The partnership aimed to reconnect older and more vulnerable people with their local GAA communities and reignite their passion for the sport.

Specsavers stores across Ireland were offered the chance to nominate and collaborate with their local GAA club on this initiative, aiming to give the elderly and more vulnerable people in

THE SPECSAVERS INITIATIVE ALLOWED 27 GAA CLUBS TO BRING GROUPS RANGING FROM SENIORS AND CLUB STALWARTS TO PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS TO GO AND EXPERIENCE THE THRILL OF A GAME



their communities a chance to attend an Allianz League game earlier this year. This initiative enabled those who may have fallen out of the habit of going to games in recent years due to Covid and who otherwise might not attend, to reconnect with their community.

Each of the Specsavers stores provided a bursary fund to their selected GAA club to support this initiative and helped provide tickets and travel to the match. Specsavers partnered with 27 GAA clubs on this initiative, with over 200 elderly or vulnerable people attending a game. Celebrating the first successful year of this initiative, Specsavers were thrilled to receive incredible feedback from attendees.

Ailbhe Rogers, Health & Wellbeing Officer of Naomh Fionnbarra & St Anne's GFG, said: 'On behalf of Naomh Fionnbarra & St Anne's GFG, please pass on our sincere thanks to everyone at Specsavers Ireland and in particular to Fiona and her staff in the Drogheda store for nominating our club for the GAA Social Initiative. We brought 18 members of the Togher Active



Retirement Group to the Football Louth v Kildare match. The very generous grant covered the cost of the minibus to and from the event and the entrance tickets to the game. Thank you so much for all the help and for choosing us. It's something I know the group will still be talking about for months to come!'

Speaking about the initiative, Chairman of Specsavers Ireland, Kerril Hickey, said: 'At Specsavers, our customers are everything to our business and after a few tough years of Covid and social isolation for many, we wanted to do something to give back to the older and more vulnerable people in our communities. The GAA Social Initiative did just that and we look forward to working with the GAA again next year'.

Customers are always guaranteed expert eyecare and hearing services, exceptional choice and outstanding value for money at Specsavers. To find out more information, request an appointment, or to speak to an expert, please call your local Specsavers team or

visit www.specsavers.ie



MULKERRINS AND CASEY CROWNED WORLD HANDBALL CHAMPIONS

By Paul Fitzpatrick

Two new world champions were crowned on Sunday as Ireland's Martin Mulherrins and Catriona Casey took gold in the Men's and Women's Opens respectively in Minneapolis.

With the triennial Worlds not having taken place since 2018 due to pandemic-related restrictions, a decision was made that this year's US Nationals would double as a Worlds Invitational which means that the new champions are celebrating on the double today.

Mulkerrins defeated Peter Jansen (Sacramento) 21-3, 21-8, Dylan Hernandez (Van Nuys, California) 21-8, 21-4 and Kilkenny's Peter Funchion 21-15, 21-15 to set up a semi-final against Clare's Diarmaid Nash, whom he had lost to in last year's US final.

This time, the Moycullen man ran out a 21-8, 21-14 winner to advance to the final, where he got the better of top American Sean Lenning 21-11, 14-21, 11-7.



CATRIONA CASEY PICTURED WITH HER WINNER'S MEDAL.

“It has been a dream of mine to win the Men’s Open World Championship and US Nationals, so it feels great!” Mulkerrins said.

“All the hard work and sacrifices have been worth it, but I suppose there is also an element of relief.

“I lost four previous finals, twice to Paul Brady (2013, 2019), to Killian Carroll (2018) in what was also combined for the world title and last year (2022) to Diarmaid Nash 11-9 in the tiebreaker.

“I’d also played two other times and lost in the semi-finals. So I was determined to win and made a big decision to move to Texas this year and compete on the Pro Tour. All of the tournaments have helped and I had confidence coming here this week that I could do it. I think I managed to peak on time as well which is not always easy to get right.”

Mulkerrins is based in College Station, Texas, where he coaches the Texas A&M team and lectures in the university.

“I have played 19 tournaments since moving to Texas last August so in terms of the next goals I think I will play the big court at home over the summer for fun really but I will need to take some time to rest too. But the Worlds will be in Ireland again in 2024 so that is now something to look forward to.”

Catriona Casey, meanwhile, displayed stellar form throughout the week. She easily despatched Suz Entzeroth from Missouri 21-1, 21-0 before enjoying a 21-8, 21-5 victory over top New York lefty Danielle Daskalakis.

In the final, Casey took on Roscommon senior ladies footballer Fiona Tully, who had beaten young Tyrone star Clodagh Munroe, who is currently studying on a handball scholarship in Minnesota.



MARTIN MULKERRINS IN ACTION AGAINST SEAN LENNING.

Casey played flawless handball in the final to win 21-8, 21-1. Having been at the top of the game for several years, this was her first Open Singles title at the Worlds.

“It feels great to have won the US and world titles. The world title is one that has eluded me, having come so close in the last two finals so it’s a bit of a monkey off the back in that sense and I’m just delighted to have that title to my name now as well,” said the Ballydesmond right-hander.

“I feel like it’s the culmination of many years of hard work and effort so it’s definitely a sweet one. To play Fiona in the final, she’s such a talented player who’s been knocking on the door for a while now and I feel like it’s only a matter of time before she makes her breakthrough so I was delighted to take the win.”

Asked how she stays motivated to compete all year round at home and abroad, Catriona said: “Motivation has never really been an issue for me. I suppose you go through periods of burn-out from playing all the codes in the US and Ireland as well but anyone that plays handball knows that there is pretty much always room for improvement and as long as I feel that I am progressing and working on my weaknesses and enjoying the sport, I’ll keep striving.”

There won’t be much time to rest on her return.

“I’ll be playing in the big alley championship as soon as I get home. I’ll be in action next weekend, it will be a quick turnaround but I’m going to try my best at that as well, singles and doubles.

“It’s exciting news that Ireland will be hosting the next World Championships in 2024 so it would be great to stay fit and healthy and try to defend my title there on home soil.”

Mulkerrins paired with Boston-based Corkman Killian Carroll to win the Open Doubles in a tiebreaker against young Americans Ray Ure and Ivan Burgos on Monday while Casey and clubmate Aishling O’Keeffe claimed the Women’s Open Doubles title.

The Men’s A final was also an all-Irish decider with Monaghan’s Gavin Coyle, the All-Ireland Intermediate champion for 2023, edging out former Cavan footballer Joe Dillon Jr.

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GAA WHERE WE ALL BELONG

LGBTQI+ COMMUNITY ENCOURAGED TO PARTICIPATE IN GAELIC GAMES

PLAYERS FROM ACROSS THE GAELIC GAMES ASSOCIATIONS ARE BEING ENCOURAGED TO SHOW THEIR SUPPORT FOR PRIDE AND THE LGBTQI+ COMMUNITY DURING THIS MONTH.

For Pride month we are shining a light on the significant work being done to make Gaelic Games more inclusive sports for the LGBTQI+ community. An Allies & Ambassadors launch took place in Croke Park recently and representatives of the GAA, Camogie Association and LGFA as well as the Gaelic Players' Association will march in the PRIDE parades in Dublin and Belfast.

The GAA first participated in PRIDE in Dublin in 2019. The three Gaelic Games Associations were the first sporting organisations to set up a Gender Diversity Working Group and transgender working group.

Uachtarán CLG Larry McCarthy stated: "Having a person of the calibre of Ger McTavish in Croke Park as a full-time Diversity and Inclusion officer is a strong signal of how seriously the GAA is approaching Diversity and Inclusion. As a community-based organisation, we are interested in bringing everyone with us in promoting lifelong participation - whether on or off the field. An essential part of that is learning to be more welcoming and understanding about how we live up to our manifesto "Where We All Belong."

That welcome and understanding has been warmly received by leading members of the LGBTQI+ community.

Ger McTavish works as a full-time Diversity and Inclusion Officer for all three organisations, and her brief is a wide-ranging one.

She says: "The aim of the GAA is to offer an inclusive, diverse, and welcoming environment for everyone. A lot of programmes are underway through different training and awareness campaigns. Over the last four years we also launched a Diversity and inclusion workshop which is a one-hour workshop that gives training to our volunteers and members of GAA clubs."

The GAA, the LGFA, the Camogie Association and the GPA have set up a working group to celebrate LGBTQI+ activations dates throughout the month of June. Allies and Ambassador Maria Curley (Tipperary LGFA), Rory O'Connor (Wexford Hurling), Stephen O'Hanlon (Monaghan Football), Aisling Maher (Dublin Camogie), Vikki Wall (GPA) launched these activations dates in Croke Park recently. The Camogie Association will host a PRIDE Round of fixtures across the weekend of June 17 and 18th.

There will be a visibility campaign the

week of June 20th which builds up to the participation by the GAA, Camogie Association, LGFA and GPA in the PRIDE Parades in Dublin on June 24 and in Belfast on July 29.

GAA members who are interested in marching as part of the Gaelic Games participants in the parades are welcome to do so.

Additional information can be found by contacting geraldine.mctavish@gaa.ie



LOUISE KEANE, CAMOGIE INCLUSION OFFICER, VINNY WHELAN, LGFA INCLUSION OFFICER, ALLIES AND AMBASSADOR AISLING MAHER (DUBLIN CAMOGIE), RORY O'CONNOR (WEXFORD HURLING), MARIA CURLEY (TIPPERARY LGFA), STEPHEN O'HANLON (MONAGHAN FOOTBALL), VIKKI WALL (GPA), GER MCTAVISH GAA DIVERSITY & INCLUSION OFFICER PICTURED TAKING PART IN THE LAUNCH OF THE LGBTQI+ ALLIES AND AMBASSADORS IN CROKE PARK

FRS RECRUITMENT ANNOUNCED AS SPONSORS OF 2023 GAA WORLD GAMES

FRS RECRUITMENT HAS BEEN ANNOUNCED AS THE TITLE SPONSOR OF THE 2023 GAA WORLD GAMES, WHICH WERE OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED AT CROKE PARK TODAY AND WILL BRING SOME 1,300 PLAYERS FROM 10 REGIONS AROUND THE GLOBE BACK HOME TO PLAY IN DERRY THIS SUMMER.

This will mark the fourth-ever staging of the competition since 2015, with the 2023 FRS Recruitment GAA World Games set to be the biggest and best yet.

The initial stages of the event will be played out at Derry's Owenbeg, Centre of Excellence from July 24 to July 27, with the finals taking place on July 28 at Celtic Park, Derry City. In keeping with the tradition of other GAA festivals, visiting teams will be twinned with local clubs throughout Derry to enhance the social and cultural element of the Games.

There are now more than 500 GAA Clubs in existence outside of Ireland and this is reflected in the presence of 105 teams that are confirmed for the FRS Recruitment GAA World Games and representing clubs from across Europe, New York, USGAA, South Africa, Argentina, Canada, Britain, Australasia, India, Asia, and the Middle East.

World titles for Football, Ladies football, Hurling and Camogie will be on offer with competing teams made up specifically of native born or Irish born players. There will be eight finals in all on a hectic day of international activity at Celtic Park and with four finals staged for Irish-born players in Football, Ladies football,



TIPPERARY HURLER BRYAN O'MARA, MAYO LADIES FOOTBALLER SARAH TIERNEY, KILKENNY CAMOGIE PLAYER STEFFI FITZGERALD, AND DERRY FOOTBALLER CONOR GLASS AT THE FRS RECRUITMENT GAA WORLD GAMES LAUNCH

Hurling and Camogie and then another four finals for native born players competing across the four codes.

It is anticipated that approximately 5,000 people will be involved in this year's Games between players, team officials, administrators, families, and supporters.

Uachtarán CLG Larry McCarthy said: "The FRS Recruitment GAA World Games will be

one of the most significant events in the GAA calendar in 2023.

"Thousands are planning to flock to Derry for what will be a spectacular festival of Gaelic games activity, and which will show people just how strong Gaelic games are outside of Ireland.

"For those who make a home from home outside of Ireland and for many others

as well, their local GAA Club is of vital importance to being able to put down roots, make new friends and create new opportunities and celebrate a culture and identity by playing our great games. Increasingly, the presence of almost 500 GAA Clubs outside of Ireland is growing the interest and participation in Gaelic games among people in many countries who are embracing the chance to play Gaelic football, hurling and camogie.

“The World Games in Derry will be a wonderful celebration and I want to thank FRS Recruitment for their assistance, our World GAA Committee, chaired by Niall Erskine, World GAA Office led by Charlie Harrison, and the clubs and county committee in Derry and I look forward to being part of the colour and excitement at Owenbeg and Celtic Park this summer.”

Colin Donnery, Group Chief Executive FRS said: “We, in FRS Recruitment, are delighted to be the title sponsor of the 2023 GAA World Games and look forward to working with the Association on this fantastic event. The GAA is such an integral part of communities across Ireland and around the world, as demonstrated by the success of the GAA World Games, and we look forward to a successful Games in Derry in late July.”

Michéal Naughton, President of the Ladies Gaelic Football Association, commented: “We are eagerly anticipating the forthcoming festival of Gaelic Games in Derry in July. The 2023 FRS Recruitment GAA World Games will attract unprecedented levels of interest and we are delighted that the Ladies Gaelic Football Association is strongly represented once again. I would like to wish all of the participating teams the very best of luck and we look forward to meeting players from all around the world. This event will provide the opportunity for all present to establish new friendships and strengthen existing ones. We never fail to be amazed by the high levels of sporting endeavour on show when the GAA World Games get underway.”

Hilda Breslin, Uachtarán Cumann Camógíochta said: “We are looking forward greatly to welcoming all of the teams who will take part in this year’s FRS Recruitment GAA World Games. The tremendous success in both 2016 and 2019 contributed greatly to a growth in Camogie across the world, we now see Camogie played in so many new and exciting locations. It is



CRISTINA MCCUSKER, EXPORT DEVELOPMENT MANAGER AT O'NEILLS IRISH INTERNATIONAL SPORTS, CENTRE, ALONGSIDE, NIALL ERSKINE, CHAIRMAN OF WORLD GAA COUNCIL COMMITTEE, RIGHT, AND GENERAL MANAGER OF FRS RECRUITMENT COLIN DONNERY FOR THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE FRS RECRUITMENT GAA WORLD GAMES LAUNCH AT CROKE PARK

particularly wonderful to see the huge rise in the number of native Camogie teams taking part in this year’s event, we are very proud of our game and to see the joy that it brings to new audiences and players re-enforces this pride. I know from personal experience that all of the teams can expect a very warm welcome to Derry in July, this year’s Games promises to be very special, creating new bonds and friendships as we showcase our unique games.”

The FRS Recruitment GAA World Games 2023 will showcase the extent to which the passion and participation for Gaelic Games has now spread far beyond our shores and will acknowledge the keepers of this flame.

The collage of international colours on parade will also be made possible by the ongoing support of official kit suppliers O’Neills.

Alison Perry, Marketing Manager for O’Neills said: “O’Neills Sportswear is proud to be part of the FRS Recruitment GAA World Games launch and to continue to have the opportunity to create the playing kits for the teams in 2023. We believe that sport has the power to unite people from all over the world, and we are delighted to be able to contribute to this celebration of Gaelic games.

“These team jerseys are always a big hit

with both players and supporters and can be purchased from our ONEILLS.COM webstore. Show your support and wear the same kit as your favourite players on the field!”

Previous GAA World Games festivals were held in Abu Dhabi in 2015, in UCD in 2016 and in Waterford in 2019.

FOR A FULL BREAKDOWN OF THE COMPETING TEAMS IN DERRY THAT RANGE FROM CAMBODIA TO CATALONIA AND FROM CHARLOTTE TO CUENCA DEL PLATA SEE WWW.GAA.IE/WORLDDGAMES/TEAMS

GETTING FIT AND HEALTHY AND READY FOR JOHN WEST FÉILE 2023

JOHN WEST, OFFICIAL SPONSOR OF FÉILE SINCE 2016, IS KEEN TO SUPPORT A HEALTHY, BALANCED DIET AND ACTIVE LIFESTYLE WITHIN THE GAA FAMILY.

Alongside the national and regional John West Féile finals in June and July, a nationwide campaign focusing on its 'No Drain' products - naturally high in protein and vitamin D to support muscle health - began in May across broadcast and digital channels as well as in supermarkets on the island of Ireland.

It highlights that what players eat is key to performing at the optimum level in games and training.

Improve your training and performance for John West Féile!

What you eat is essential to help you perform to your optimum level in games and training. Proper food and fluid intake is required to prevent tiredness as low energy and dehydration are the main nutritional causes of fatigue. Fatigue prevents you from achieving maximum fitness resulting in poor performance and injury.



Did you know ...

- Protein is essential for making muscle since it forms the building blocks of muscle tissue
- Eating adequate amounts of protein helps us maintain muscle and promotes muscle growth and repair.
- This is particularly important if you are playing a few matches in one day.
- High protein intake will aid your recovery, helping you to get ready for your next training session/ match.
- 15-25g of high-quality protein is suggested by sporting organisations and sports scientists within 2-3 hours after exercise to stimulate muscle protein synthesis.

A LITTLE BIT ABOUT OUR PRODUCTS...

John West high-quality natural protein products help optimise the physical growth and development of young players' muscles.

Perfect as part of your pre training snacks (2-3 hours pre-event), or as a post recovery snack (45 min post sport training or game), the John West No Drain range is naturally high in protein and vitamin D supporting your muscles. Try No Drain Tuna, No Drain Infusions or No Drain Fridgepot!

GET THE FACTS NUTRITION

John West No Drain Tuna Steak Fridge Pot

126 CALORIES

29G PROTEIN

1G FAT

1G SALT



John West No Drain is naturally high in Protein and Vitamin D. Protein contributes to the maintenance (and growth) in muscle mass. Vit D contributes to the maintenance of normal muscle function. Enjoy as part of a varied, balanced and a healthy lifestyle.

JOHN WEST GAA FÉILE 2023 INFO...

The John West Féile na nGael (Camogie and Hurling) finals will be played on Saturday, June 24, with the Féile Peile na nÓg (and Gaelic football and Ladies football) finals taking place on Saturday, July 1, at the Connacht GAA Centre of Excellence at Began, Co Mayo.

Regional finals in all four codes for counties outside of division one will also take place on the last Saturday in June (Féile na nGael) and the first Saturday of July (Féile Peile na nÓg), at venues nationwide. See you there!

UP TO €25,000 UP FOR GRABS FOR LOCAL GAA CLUBS THROUGH KELLOGG'S GAA CÚL CAMPS ON-PACK COMPETITION

BROADCASTER AND WINNER OF SERIES 6 OF DANCING WITH THE STARS, CARL MULLAN WAS ON HAND TO OFFICIALLY LAUNCH THE 2023 KELLOGG'S GAA CÚL CAMPS ON-PACK COMPETITION. KELLOGG, NOW IN ITS 12TH YEAR SPONSORING KELLOGG'S GAA CÚL CAMPS, HAS LAUNCHED ITS NATIONWIDE COMPETITION FOR ALL GAA CLUBS ACROSS THE COUNTRY TO BE IN WITH A CHANCE OF WINNING INCREDIBLE PRIZES WORTH €40,000¹.

Following feedback from previous winners, the prize funds provide GAA clubs with an incredible opportunity to claim great prizes through a very simple mechanic. All that is required is to simply purchase a promotional box of Kellogg's Coco Pops, Corn Flakes or Rice Krispies. Using the unique on-pack code, found inside the box, log on to [kelloggsculcamps.gaa.ie/](https://www.kelloggsculcamps.gaa.ie/) competition and nominate a club of your choice. Cash prizes of €25,000, €10,000 and €5,000 are available to win.

Starting early June, the camps will run up to the end of August.

Visit www.kelloggsculcamps/gaa.ie for further booking information.

Sarah Ferguson, Kellogg Ireland General Manager said "Based on incredible feedback and very popular engagement levels, we are delighted to officially launch the nationwide

competition. This is open for all GAA clubs across the country to be in with a chance to win prizes worth a total of €40,000. This on-pack competition provides GAA members with a great opportunity to raise vital funds for their club and for them to be the hero in entering. This year, your club needs you!

We love getting feedback from previous winners in terms of what it really means to them and the difference it can make. Through our partnership with Kellogg's GAA Cúl Camps, we are very proud to support the grassroots of the GAA."

Last year, Mountbellew/Moylough in Co. Galway claimed first prize in the 2022 Kellogg's GAA Cúl Camps on-pack promotion, winning a game-changing €25,000 for the club.

Commenting on winning first prize, Seamus Hogan from Mountbellew/Moylough said: "We are incredibly lucky to have won the top prize in Kellogg's GAA Cúl Camps on-pack competition last year. We are using the prize money to help us build and maintain our GAA facilities and allow us to continue to host Kellogg's GAA Cúl Camps in years to come. We'd like to sincerely thank Kellogg and all those who nominated us for helping us to secure this prize which will be spent improving our grounds and services."

For more information on the Kellogg's GAA Cúl Camps visit [gaa.ie/kelloggsculcamps](https://www.kelloggsculcamps)

Prizes available are: €25,000 for first place, €10,000 for second place and €5,000 for third place. Terms and Conditions Apply ROI and NI only. Parental permission for u18s, participating pack and internet access required. To nominate your club:

purchase participating pack, scan QR code, select GAA club and complete test of skill. No purchase necessary for NI residents only.

For full T&C's, please visit <https://www.kelloggsculcamps.gaa.ie/terms-and-conditions>



By Collette Coady

CRAIC GUARANTEED! - GAA DADS & LADS GOES FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

GAELIC GAMES HAVE BEEN PLAYED RECREATIONALLY FOR MANY YEARS, BUT BACK IN 2019 THE 'GAA FOR DADS & LADS' SOCIAL HURLING AND FOOTBALL PROGRAMME WAS DEVELOPED FOR THOSE KEEN TO ENJOY GAELIC GAMES OUTSIDE THE TRADITIONAL COMPETITIVE STRUCTURES OF THE GAA. THE ETHOS OF GAA DADS & LADS IS ALL ABOUT PARTICIPATION AND CAMARADERIE WITH AN EMPHASIS ON PARTICIPATING FOR FUN, ENJOYMENT, AND SOCIAL INTERACTION. THERE HAS BEEN STEADY GROWTH IN THE NUMBER OF TEAMS FORMED ACROSS THE COUNTRY FROM 20 IN 2019 TO 160 IN 2023.

General GAA playing rules apply, but all teams must follow the ethos and principles of GAA Dads & Lads – no aggressive tackling or shoulder charges, just incidental contact. Pitches are adapted, usually half size regulation and goals and games are self-governed with no referees. It's the closest we can get to the days of our youth with 'jumpers for goalposts!'

GAA Dads & Lads offers Football and Hurling games opportunities for those aged 40ish and older. Participants are made up of retired players, lapsed players looking to reconnect with playing and those who never played but want to give it a try.

As the Dads & Lads movement has grown many GAA Dads & Lads teams link up and organise challenge games or local blitzes and nationally the GAA organise an annual National Blitz and for the first

time in 2023 have organised Regional Blitzes. The challenge games and blitzes have and do provide an opportunity to broaden GAA Dads & Lads connections and offer the opportunity to play games in a recreational environment. The National and Regional Blitzes aren't competition based, there are no blitz winner trophies handed out, but teams participating in 2023 have the opportunity to be presented with the Na Lochra Award and a small bursary to support the purchasing of playing equipment for the team. It is given to the team that plays all their blitz games in the ethos of Dads & Lads. For more information on GAA Dads & Lads and to register a team <https://www.gaa.ie/my-gaa/community-and-health/social-games-physical-activity/dads-and-lads> Conor Holland a GAA Dads & Lads player (and team coordinator) shares with us his experiences of being involved.

GAA: How did you become involved in playing Dads & Lads?

CH: My home club is Killeeshil (Tyrone) and I played competitively with them, but when I got married, I moved into a different area, which made it difficult to get over and back to Killeeshil. I heard that the local club, Beragh, were starting a Dads & Lads team. I just wanted the opportunity to get out and play, just to have a kick about.

GAA: Tell us a little bit about the Beragh Dads & Lads.

CH: There are about 20 of us, aged from late 30s up late 50s. Lads who retired from playing, and some who never played



before. We meet up every Monday evening from 9pm to 10pm and just play football. Laps are banned!

GAA: How was the Dads & Lads Team Set Up?

CH: We've been going since January 2022, we looked at some other clubs and what they were doing and learned from them, it started off slowly, but has become an established part of the club. It takes some

organising in the beginning, just getting the idea out there between a few lads, in the beginning numbers participating were lower, but you keep at it, set a group chat up and once the basics are in place it runs itself really. You're just sending out a reminder message on a Sunday evening to the group, no pressure on anyone to be there, just come along if you want to play. GAA: The Beragh Dads & Lads enjoy the Monday Meet Ups?



SHANE MCCANN, ULSTER GAA, REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICER (EAST) PRESENTING NA LOCHRA AWARD TO CONOR HOLLAND, BERAGH DADS & LADS PLAYER/COORDINATOR

CH: Yeah, the Lads love it. We get 12-15 lads playing every week. It's an hour where we get to let off a bit of steam and not have to think about anything other than playing. It's somewhere to meet up and catch up, have a bit of craic and get to play football. Everyone has different playing ability, some a little faster than others so if a pass or a shot goes astray no one gives out, some gentle banter and joking but it's played in a good spirit. We all look forward to it.

GAA: Why do you play Dads & Lads?

CH: It's been a great way to build connections and get to know people in the local community. People see you in and around the club, and they recognise you then out and about, stop and chat. I enjoy the camaraderie and meeting up with the lads, and it's an opportunity for me to keep playing and stay involved in the game.

GAA: Beragh Dads & Lads participated in the Northern Regional Blitz hosted in Tyrone GAA Centre in April, and were presented with the Na Lochra Award, what did it mean to the team?

CH: The lads were buzzed, delighted and the €250 bursary (donated by McKeever Sports) will really help. It was great to get out and play games against different teams, and link in with other Dads & Lads. The blitz was great fun too, nobody really kept an eye on the scores, and I know we didn't win all our matches, but we played all our games with enjoyment in mind. The Na Lochra Award has been shared among the team; each player gets to keep it over a couple of nights at home, you know like when you were playing as a young fella! It's been shown to their children, grannys and families it really topped off the day, nice too to be able to share it with everyone.

There is a Dads & Lads National Blitz being planned for the end of September. If interested in being kept up-to-date on Dads & Lads Blitzes and information register a team [here](#)



DADS & LADS PARTICIPATING TEAMS 2023 NORTHERN REGIONAL BLITZ, TYRONE GAA CENTRE (BERAGH; CLANN NA BANNA; CUCHULIANN'S MULLAGHBAWN; MOY GAC; ST PATRICK'S DONAGH)

GAA ANNOUNCED AS SDG CHAMPION

THE GAA HAS BEEN APPOINTED BY MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE AND COMMUNICATIONS, EAMON RYAN TD, AS ONE OF IRELAND'S CHAMPIONS TO HELP PROGRESS THE UNITED NATIONS' SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS).

26 organisations were selected as part of the 2023-2024 SDG Champions Programme, to raise public awareness of the SDGs and to demonstrate that everyone in society can make a contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The role of an SDG Champion is to act as an advocate and promoter of the SDGs and provide good practice examples of how an organisation can contribute to the SDGs and integrate them into their work and activities.

Of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals, the GAA has been awarded SDG Champion Status for Goals 3 - Good Health & Wellbeing, 4 - Quality Education, 15 - Life on Land and 17 - Partnerships.

Speaking about the launch, Minister Ryan said: "We are facing major challenges in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, with unprecedented pressures on our planet, economy and society, as well as the impacts brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. Now is the time to accelerate action towards achieving the goals, to build back better while leaving no one behind.

"The SDG Champions Programme recognises that the SDGs are for everyone and that everyone can make

a contribution to their success. Over 80 organisations applied to take part in the programme this year, underlining the readiness of Irish society to assist in ensuring that Ireland becomes a global leader in achieving the goals. Achieving the SDG targets by 2030 is a collective task that cannot be accomplished without partnership."

Jimmy D'Arcy, GAA Sustainability & Youth Leadership Manager, said: "The GAA is committed to developing healthy and sustainable communities. Good health and wellbeing are directly linked to participation in physical activity and meaningful social engagement. We offer opportunities for both through quality coaching and initiatives delivered by our Community & Health Department, such as the Irish Life GAA Healthy Club Programme and the Green Club Programme.

"Our Coach Education and Officer Development Programmes as well as our mainstream education programmes like the GAA Future Leaders Transition Year Programme seek to provide lifelong learning opportunities for our members."

Padraig Fallon, Chair of the GAA Green Club Steering Group, added: "With GAA, LGFA or Camogie Clubs in almost every community across the island, we are very conscious of our impact on the physical environment and we are endeavouring to work in harmony with our surroundings to support biodiversity and life on land. We published our GAA Green Club Toolkit recently which contains a library of resources to help Clubs implement

JIMMY D'ARCY, GAA SUSTAINABILITY & YOUTH LEADERSHIP MANAGER, AND PADRAIG FALLON, CHAIR OF THE GAA GREEN CLUB STEERING GROUP, AT THE SDG CHAMPIONS LAUNCH.





SDG CHAMPIONS PICTURED WITH MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE AND COMMUNICATIONS, EAMON RYAN TD.

sustainability activities under 5 thematic areas; Energy, Water, Waste, Biodiversity and Transport.”

The GAA Green Club Toolkit is freely available to all our members at <https://learning.gaa.ie/greenclub>. The Toolkit was developed with our partners in local government, the Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs) and expert input from organisations and agencies across the island of Ireland, including the SEAI, Action Renewables, LAWPro, Irish Water, NI Water, the Regional Waste Management Offices, the National Biodiversity Data Centre, RSPB NI, the NTA, the RSA, Keep NI Beautiful and

Sustainable NI.

The Healthy Club and Green Club Programmes are examples of how through building partnerships with other stakeholders at all levels of the Association, the GAA endeavours to embed sustainable development concepts and practices throughout the organisation.

Padraig Fallon, continued: “Our Clubs have been innovators in addressing many of Ireland’s social concerns and as such we are delighted to be recognised as a leader in society for the implementation of the SDGs.”

The 26 SDG Champions for 2023/2024 Champions are:

- An Post
- An Taisce
- AONTAS
- Ballyhoura Development CLG
- Chambers Ireland
- Clare County Council
- Development Perspectives
- ECO-UNESCO
- Football Association of Ireland (FAI)
- Fáilte Ireland
- Fair Seas
- Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA)

- Irish League of Credit Unions
- Iarnród Éireann – Irish Rail
- Jiminy Eco Toys
- Macra na Feirme
- Musgrave
- National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI)
- Peter McVerry Trust
- RTÉ
- Rush Tidy Towns
- Sustainable Life School
- TESCO Ireland
- The Heritage Council
- TIER Mobility
- University of Galway

LAUNCH OF NEW SPORTS SCIENCE FRAMEWORK FOR GAELIC GAMES

A SPECIALLY DESIGNED FRAMEWORK FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND PROVISION OF SPORTS SCIENCE AT CLUB AND COUNTY LEVEL ACROSS GAELIC GAMES HAS BEEN LAUNCHED.

For more than two years a workgroup of experts chaired by Dr Aoife Lane has spearheaded the development of guidelines in best practice that aim to make sports science accessible to not just elite inter-county teams but of relevance and benefit to players at every stage of the Gaelic Games Player Pathway.

Speaking at its initial launch Dr Lane said: “We’re very conscious of clubs investing a lot of money in specialists when there could and should be a pathway for club coaches to get some accreditation or qualification to be able to deliver content around athletic development, nutrition or performance analysis, for example.”

The purpose of this new guide is to provide a framework for the application of sports science across Gaelic Games that is aligned to the Gaelic Games Player Pathway. Healthy and holistic player development may be led by the Gaelic Games workforce, and also coaches, teachers, parents and guardians, and can be supported by evidence-based education and qualified practitioners from various disciplines of sports science. This sports science knowledge and experience is most beneficial to coaches and players when consistently and appropriately applied and delivered in practice within the values of Gaelic Games.

Uachtarán CLG Larry McCarthy said:

“Sports science has an important role to play in the ongoing evolution of our games. Anything that aligns to our manifesto of Where We All Belong and enables us to fulfil our goal of having as many as possible play and be involved for as long as possible is an asset. Ireland continues to produce academics and practitioners, of world class calibre in the cutting edge of sports science and we are fortunate to benefit from their interest in our games and have the opportunity to embed best practice for the aid of every player at every level.”

Speaking on behalf of the Ladies Gaelic Football Association, President Mícheál Naughton said: “We are acutely aware of the ongoing and ever-increasing importance of sports science in Ladies Gaelic Football and across the wider Gaelic Games family. The correct use of sports science, and its application, has helped to elevate our sport to new and exciting levels. Sports science is now critically important in the preparation of elite level teams and can also help to increase participation levels at all grades. Sports science can help to identify strengths and weaknesses in individual athletes and thereby assist in the overall improvement of teams and team culture. Our athletes are now so up to date with their training protocols and preparation and the implementation of good sports science practices helps to ensure that management teams are leaving nothing to chance. The introduction of this new framework is another excellent example of the collaboration across Gaelic Games Associations for the betterment of all of players.”



Hilda Breslin, Uachtarán Camogie Association said: “Sports science is playing an increasing role in the development of our players and in the preparation of our teams. The Sports Science Framework outlines how sports science can be appropriately and effectively used for every player from club right through to elite level. The framework continues the coaching and player pathway collaboration across the Gaelic Games family, utilising experts in the various fields of sports science for the benefit of all players”.

The Performance Analysis Guide for Practice was launched in October 2022 (Groundbreaking performance analysis guide launched). There is an education pathway for all coaches interested

in completing the Introduction to Performance Analysis Courses (online) as well as accreditation workshops designed specifically for Performance Analysts. The other 5 discipline groups will begin work, in collaboration with the Gaelic games system, on designing (and in some cases updating) learning and development opportunities that will help inform good practice for all involved in the gaelic games family including volunteer coaches, administrators, staff, players and parents/guardians.

It is envisioned that the full delivery of this programme can be achieved by 2030 with capacity for adaptation and responsiveness to an ever evolving and expanding evidence base for sports science, particularly in the context of Gaelic Games and across specific

subgroups of expertise.

The six subgroups are; Athletic Development, Nutrition, Physiotherapy & Rehabilitation, Sports Psychology, Performance Analysis and Skill Acquisition.

Further details on this initiative and the vision for Sports Science in Gaelic Games between now and 2030 can be found in a podcast discussion between Martin Kennedy of GAA Games Development with Dr Lane via: <https://youtu.be/GEhN97yvAbs>

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AOIFE LANE, CENTRE, WITH, FROM LEFT, PHIL KEARNEY, KATE KIRBY, DES RYAN, EAMON O'REILLY, DENISE MARTIN, NIALL MOYNA AND SHARON MADIGAN DURING THE GAELIC GAMES SPORTS SCIENCE LAUNCH AT CROKE PARK IN DUBLIN.

By Richard McElligott

THE GAA AND THE CIVIL WAR



MICHAEL COLLINS, LUKE O'TOOLE AND HARRY BOLAND AT CROKE PARK FOR THE 1921 LEINSTER HURLING FINAL.

ON THE 11 SEPTEMBER, 1921 THE DUBLIN AND KILKENNY HURLERS MET IN THAT YEAR'S LEINSTER FINAL. IT WAS A MATCH MORE NOTABLE FOR THE ICONIC PHOTOGRAPHS OF A BEAMING MICHAEL COLLINS BEING INTRODUCED TO THE

PLAYERS THAN DUBLIN'S EIGHT POINTS VICTORY. ACCOMPANIED BY HIS OLD FRIEND AND COMRADE HARRY BOLAND, COLLINS BASKED IN THE ADULATION OF THE 17,000 STRONG CROWD AND TOLD THEM: 'THE GAA WAS THE PIONEER BODY IN THE DEFENCE

OF THE NATIONAL INTEREST. NOW THAT WE ARE COMING INTO OUR OWN AGAIN THE GAA MUST BE A MORE SERVICEABLE FACTOR THAN EVER IN UPBUILDING THE MUSCULAR PROWESS AND CONSOLIDATING THE NATIONAL SPIRIT.'

The principal architect of the IRA's military success in bringing the British Empire to the negotiating table, Collins had by now stepped out of the revolutionary shadows to become arguably the most publicly recognisable face in the country. Yet the Treaty he soon negotiated with the British Government would bring civil war to Ireland. The impact and legacy of that squalid and bitter conflict would shadow the independent Irish state for decades to come. Even as we approach the centenary of its formal ending on 24 May, it remains hard to quantify the trauma the struggle inflicted on Irish society.

The tragedy of the Irish Civil War is encapsulated by the fate of Collins and Boland. Less than a year later both lay dead, killed in highly controversial circumstances while fighting on opposite sides. Their acrimonious fallout over the Treaty would be replicated throughout this island. Likewise, the GAA, an organisation which had given its active support to the independence struggle, could not help but be convulsed by the intense political fissures now erupting.

Collins was the highest profile casualty of the conflict with GAA connections, having been a player and secretary of the London Geraldines club while working for nearly a decade in the city. Boland, meanwhile, was the personification of the often-intimate connections between membership of the Association and nationalist politics in this era. A former inter-county hurler, All-Ireland final referee and Dublin GAA chairman, Boland had also been in the IRB for nearly 20 years and now served as Vice-President of Sinn Féin. In his

impassioned denunciation of the Treaty during the subsequent Dáil debates, Boland declared: 'I object because this Treaty denies the sovereignty of the Irish nation and I stand by the principles I have always held – that the Irish people are by right a free people. I object to this Treaty because it is the very negation of all that for which we have fought.'

Many others in the Association were just as virulent in their rejection of the Treaty and in their support of the IRA in the Civil War that erupted over its terms in June 1922. They included Austin Stack, the former All-Ireland winning captain and Kerry GAA Chairman, who had served as Minister for Home Affairs in the Dáil government that oversaw the political struggle against British rule. Stack condemned the settlement as a betrayal of the principles of someone 'nurtured in the traditions of Fenianism'. Yet like the population at large, a majority of the leadership of the GAA backed the Treaty with J.J. Walsh and Eoin O'Duffy, both members of the Central Council, becoming prominent within Collins' Pro-Treaty regime.

Throughout the spring of 1922 the Association did its best to ignore the ominous gathering of war clouds and concentrated on its sporting responsibilities – particularly the completion of competitions at county and national level, which were heavily in arrears owing to the wartime disruption of the previous two years. Its Annual Congress was dominated by deliberations over the GAA's central role in the proposed Tailteann Games project (originally due to be held in the summer of 1922). Delegates also debated the ongoing negotiations with the Irish Amateur Athletic Association to create a new independent national body for the governance of Irish athletics (leading in 1923 to the formation of the National Athletic and Cycling Association of



MICHAEL COLLINS TALKING TO MEMBERS OF THE KILKENNY HURLING TEAM BEFORE THE 1921 LEINSTER HURLING FINAL.

Ireland or NACA). The last Central Council meeting before the conflict's outbreak was taken up with a discussion over the final bill for a memorial to be unveiled in Thurles in honour of Archbishop Thomas Croke, the first patron of the Association. The meeting also considered upcoming plans for an extensive redevelopment of Croke Park for the Tailteann Games which included the construction of a new stand at an estimated cost of £13,200.

Yet increasingly conscious of the internal divisions festering over the Treaty, the

GAA became determined to adopt a neutral, apolitical stance. And this is the position they maintained, albeit with difficulty, throughout the course of the subsequent Civil War. As part of this strategy the GAA took steps to ban the distribution of any political material at its games. It also put a stop to collections for political purposes taking place on match days. This tightrope of impartiality saw the Association give their consent to the hosting of GAA competitions among teams affiliated to IRA battalions across Munster in February. Meanwhile in May,

the GAA allowed County Boards to accept affiliation from teams connected with the new National Army. In early June, they also supported the formation of an Army Athletic Association created, in the words of O'Duffy, 'to foster and cater for all forms of Gaelic sport'.

Once armed combat began between the Anti-Treaty IRA and the Provisional Government's National Army on 26 June, the Association was forced to immediately postpone its national and local competitions. It also quickly ended its

previously vocal support of IRA prisoners. The IRA's re-adoption of guerrilla warfare from August 1922 devastated transport and communications infrastructure across large parts of the country and compounded the War's impact on GAA events. While less affected areas of the country were able to recommence local and some inter-county activity from the Autumn of 1922, in Munster, where the fighting was heaviest, GAA events remained suspended well into 1923.

The War could not but intrude on the routine administration of Gaelic games

activity in other ways. On 9 August, a meeting of the Dublin County Board passed a solemn vote of condolence to Boland's family on the 'tragic death' of their honorary president. Two weeks later a meeting of the same body opened by acknowledging the 'calamity that had taken place in the death of General Michael Collins, which was so deeply deplored'. Despite the ongoing conflict the GAA's leadership was, however, anxious to be seen to uphold its nationalist credentials and ensure its foreign games ban was still being respected. In November, the Association's Secretary,

Luke O'Toole, was sent to meet O'Duffy to ascertain why soccer competitions were being run by the Army in certain districts. A similar accusation that Army units in Limerick were indulging in rugby games was also investigated.

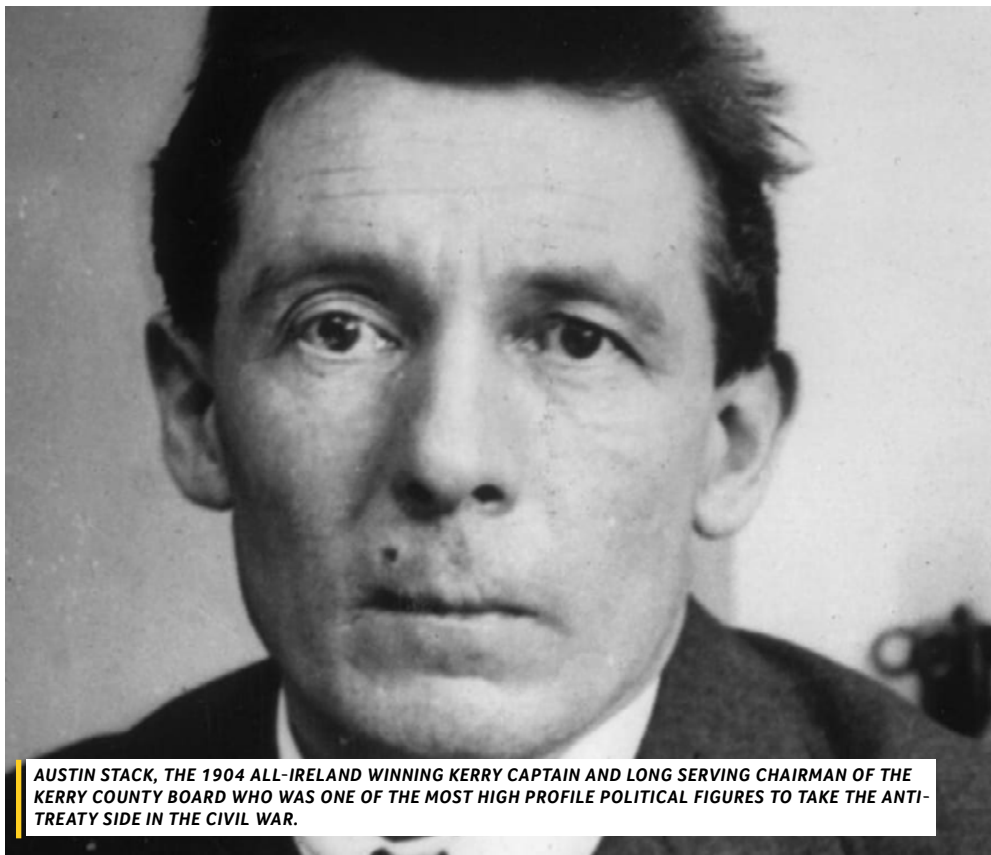
The GAA not only had to contend with internecine warfare in the embryonic Irish Free State but also the sectarian violence that marked the formation of Northern Ireland in this era. Notably on 14 January 1922, ten members of the Monaghan team were arrested by a unit of B-Specials in Dromore, Tyrone, on their way to contest

the delayed 1921 Ulster final. The men were identified by the Northern authorities as being active IRA members and they included Tipperary's Dan Hogan, the O/C of the 5th Northern Division and brother of Michael Hogan shot in the Bloody Sunday killings in Croke Park eighteen months before. In retaliation, local IRA units kidnapped over forty loyalists in the region, kickstarting a wave of attacks that left thirty people dead in Belfast alone. Eventually the Northern Government was pressured by London to release the Monaghan players but over the next two years the unionist state's security forces continued to actively target GAA members as part of their operations. Many were interned and as a result GAA activity was severely disrupted across the six counties at this time.

While it is impossible to calculate the exact number of GAA members directly involved in the Civil War throughout Southern Ireland, there are multiple examples on both sides. This was especially true of Kerry where the struggle was most brutally fought and left its bitterest aftertaste. The prominence of GAA figures in the leadership of Republican forces there was a legacy of the arguably unique link between the Association and radical nationalism in Kerry. The ex-Kerry player Humphrey Murphy commanded the Kerry No. 1 IRA Brigade while his Dr Crokes teammate, John Joe Rice, took command of the Kerry No. 2 Brigade. Meanwhile John Joe Sheehy, Kerry's star-forward, was O/C of the IRA battalion in his native Tralee. All three represented a younger, more aggressive generation of Kerry IRA leaders, with notable GAA backgrounds, who directed the Republican struggle there. Yet while the majority of active Kerry IRA members had rejected the Treaty, there were exceptions. Con Brosnan, who became an icon of Kerry football, enlisted in the National Army and was stationed in Tarbert for most of its duration.



MICHAEL COLLINS MEETING PLAYERS BEFORE THE 1921 LEINSTER HURLING FINAL.



AUSTIN STACK, THE 1904 ALL-IRELAND WINNING KERRY CAPTAIN AND LONG SERVING CHAIRMAN OF THE KERRY COUNTY BOARD WHO WAS ONE OF THE MOST HIGH PROFILE POLITICAL FIGURES TO TAKE THE ANTI-TREATY SIDE IN THE CIVIL WAR.

Today the most widely accepted figure for the number of Civil War fatalities is around 1,600. How many of those were actual GAA members is unclear. Donal McAnallen's brilliant research into the question of GAA fatalities during the War of Independence uncovered at least seventy-four examples: <https://www.gaa.ie/news/the-war-of-independence-and-gaa-members-deaths/>

Given the more localised aspect of the Civil War and its significantly shorter duration, the logical implication is that this conflict also resulted in dozens rather

than hundreds of GAA deaths. For example the Cork Fatality Register for the Civil War, recently compiled by historians Dr Andy Bielenberg and Professor James S. Donnelly, lists the 236 individuals killed in the fighting there: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/theirishrevolution/collections/cork-fatality-register/register-index/1922-140/>

Yet only three of them have any noted links with the Association including Seán O'Donoghue, an IRA battalion commander and member of the Lee football club, who was apprehended by the National Army in Cork city on 28 September,

beaten and then summarily executed. Another was George McGlynn, a soldier and footballer with Naas GAA, who was mortally wounded repelling an IRA attack at Ballyvourney in December 1922. In Kerry there is a GAA connection to the most infamous deaths in the struggle. One of the victims of the Ballyseedy mine explosion was George O'Shea, who twinned his captaincy of the Kilflynn IRA Company with that of the parish hurlers. His friend and teammate was Stephen Fuller who played for another local combination, the Tullig Gamecocks, that won the county hurling championship of 1916. Fuller was the only survivor of the atrocity. Blown clear by the explosion, he managed to 'scramble away somehow'. Hiding in a nearby dugout when he heard the detonation, Sheehy helped rescue Fuller and quickly published his eyewitness account, exposing the lies the National Army concocted about the explosion being an accident. Despite suffering 'severe shock' and extensive burns, Fuller made a sufficient physical recovery to resume his hurling career, captaining Kilflynn to the North Kerry Hurling League title of 1927. GAA members were also innocent bystanders caught in the maelstrom of violence. In February 1923 the Offaly footballer, Jack Finlay, was shot dead outside Tullamore while resisting an attempt by IRA raiders to seize the goods he was transporting.

Meanwhile the State's execution of two Clare GAA figures now saw the Association's neutral façade crumble in the face of local rage and resentment. On 20 January 1923 Con MacMahon and Patrick Hennessy were put in front of a firing squad charged with the possession of ammunition and for their suspected part in the destruction of a local railway line. Both were hurlers while Hennessy was also secretary of the Clare GAA. Recent research by Dr Tomás Mac Conmara has detailed that at a subsequent county convention several delegates resigned in

protest when the meeting refused to pass a motion of sympathy to the Hennessy family. In the aftermath a rival county board, known as the 'Group of Old Gaels', was formed by Republicans in Clare under Sean MacNamara. For months the Clare GAA was effectively riven in two with twenty-five clubs affiliating to the new body while twenty-six remained loyal to the County Board. Although the split was officially ended in late 1924, Mac Conmara notes the divisions of the Civil War would endure, beneath the surface, for years after in the Clare GAA.

Paradoxically the killing of two other GAA members was the catalyst for the Association's only direct attempt to intercede in the conflict. On 7 December the Cork Pro-Treaty TD, Sean Hales, was assassinated in reprisal for supporting the introduction of the Government's Public Safety Act, which had authorised executions for those convicted of IRA activity. Hales, the only Cork IRA Brigade commander who had endorsed the Treaty, was also a renowned former athlete and hurler with the Valley Rovers GAA club. Outraged by his death, within twenty-four hours the Government selected four IRA prisoners for immediate execution: Rory O'Connor, Liam Mellows, Joe McKelvey and Richard Barrett. Barrett was a fellow Corkman and the secretary of the Knockvilla GAA club. At the next meeting of the Cork County Board its chairman, James Mende, decreed that 'a chapter of most tragic events had occurred in their country'. He bemoaned that Hales' 'loss was irreparable [being] the pioneer of the Irish Ireland movement in West Cork', while Barrett was 'one of the finest types of young fellows ... who was the life of the GAA in West Cork.' The meeting ended with the Board unanimously voting to request the Central Council to convene an All-Ireland convention of the GAA 'for the purpose of discussing ways and means by which the present conflict could be bridged over.'

A week later the Central Council agreed that it would 'work with anybody or Committee likely to bring about peace and unity amongst the people.' On 7 January 1923 a deputation of Central Council members was appointed 'to ascertain the views of prominent members of the Association on both sides as to peace and report to a further meeting of the Central Council to be held on the 21 January with a view of calling a special All Ireland convention for 4 February.' Yet any hope this intervention would have the desired impact was quickly dashed. Two weeks later, the deputation reported back that neither the Republican leadership nor the Government had any appetite for the GAA's diplomatic foray. Fearing that a convention on the issue would only give public airing to the deep divisions within its membership over the War, the Association decided 'no useful purpose would be served in calling a National Convention' and abandoned its plans so as to preserve its appearance of neutrality.

Given that the lingering animosity of the Civil War would take decades to evaporate, apoliticism now became a governing tenet of the Association. But though the conflict soon petered out to its inevitable conclusion, the legacies it bequeathed to the GAA were complex. Historians of the Association like W.F. Mandle have argued that the heated debates around retaining or removing the foreign games ban in the 1920s was one proxy war that continued to be fought between the republican and Free State factions of the Association.

Yet a more immediate and potentially incendiary issue, according to the historian William Murphy, was the fate of the 12,000 Republicans held in State internment camps by the War's end. In the words of one detainee, Billy Mullins, 'football took pride of place' in the camps, helping to while away the hours while also keeping up fitness and morale. Inter-



A EOIN O'DUFFY, SECRETARY OF THE ULSTER GAA COUNCIL AND MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATION'S CENTRAL COUNCIL. HE WAS ALSO A TD FOR MONAGHAN AND A GENERAL IN THE NATIONAL ARMY BEFORE BEING APPOINTED AS COMMISSIONER OF THE CIVIC GUARDS IN SEPTEMBER 1922.

county contests were often arranged with the *Kildare Observer* reporting on 'Kildare's' decisive defeat of 'Dublin' at the Newbridge camp in October 1922. A year later a mass hunger strike was orchestrated within the camps to force the Government into releasing thousands of Republicans. In some counties the GAA was now put under pressure to suspend activity to support the protest. In Cork this led to goal posts being torn down at venues like Turner's Cross. In Waterford, local branches of Sinn Féin intervened to prevent matches being staged. Although the strike broke down in confusion in

early November, at the end of the month Republicans in Kilkenny formally called on the County Board to 'postpone all future fixtures until the prisoners were released'. Refusing the request, the Kilkenny Chairman declared: 'The GAA has never allowed itself to be dragged into any political party, no matter what that party ... our policy is broad enough for every creed ... It embraces all parties, and we cannot attach ourselves to any particular one.' Not everyone agreed with the sentiment. The Callan GAA delegates stated that they would take no further part in the county championship, while members of

Clomantagh club now left the meeting in protest.

By the summer of 1924 the prisoners issue had still not been resolved and hundreds of prominent Republicans remained incarcerated. They included the likes of Austin Stack and in Kerry Sinn Féin TDs now called on the county team to withdraw from the upcoming All-Ireland against Dublin until their release was secured. Aware that a significant number of the Kerry team were themselves recent Republican internees, the IRA's leadership recognised this as a perfect opportunity

to resurrect the issue among the media and general public. On 10 June a meeting of the Kerry players announced that they would boycott the final. As a result, the Central Council awarded the title to Dublin which set off a chain reaction of protests. Limerick announced they would not meet Galway in the hurling decider while Cork, Offaly, Laois and Louth all declared their intention to withdraw from upcoming championship games. When Croke Park threatened to suspend all counties taking part in the protest, the Munster Council stated they would refuse to participate in any preparations for the forthcoming Tailteann Games. The tense standoff was, however, resolved by the Government's decision to release all remaining prisoners in July. When a special GAA congress was convened a month later the proceedings were described as 'temperate and mainly conciliatory' with the boycotted fixtures being re-arranged and Kerry contesting their final on 28 September.

Of course the official cessation of hostilities in May 1923, did not end the Civil War's physical, psychological, or material impacts. A still under researched legacy is the number of participants whose physical as well as mental health was severely affected by their activity. Stack died in 1929, aged forty-nine, having never fully recovered from the October 1923 hunger strike he participated in. Similarly Giles Cooper of the Glenflesk GAA would die in February 1925 as a direct result of the hardships endured while living on the run during the conflict's final months. His comrade Cornelius O'Leary resumed his GAA career, playing for Dr Crokes and the Kerry junior footballers. Yet having long suffered from depression connected to his war service, in July 1930 O'Leary had a complete mental breakdown. Barricading himself into his room in the nursing home he had just been admitted to, O'Leary committed suicide by slitting his throat with a piece of broken china. For Republicans, post-Civil War

Ireland was also a society in which they faced frequent discrimination. Many had already lost their livelihoods due to their active involvement in the anti-Treatyite struggle. The future Kerry star Joe Barrett was released from internment only to find his family business in ruins forcing him to rebuild it from scratch.

In the years which followed much would be made of how the GAA provided a potent and popular platform for reconciliation. In 1946 a new history of the Association entitled **60 Glorious Years** noted: 'In the lure of their native games Irishmen ... standing side by side on the sportsfield, soon learned to look again on their brothers as brothers, not as enemies.' While such arguments have often been exaggerated, they are not without some foundation. One of the first major GAA events in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War was the formal opening on 22 July of the Cavan 'Athletic Grounds', soon to be rechristened Breffni Park. It represented the first of a whole host of county grounds that would be developed across Ireland in the decade to come. The fact the stage was shared by both O'Duffy and Frank Fahy, secretary of the Gaelic League and an Anti-Treaty TD for Galway, was hailed by Cavan GAA President, B.C. Fay, as 'the first occasion since the trouble started that a Republican TD and a Free State TD had stood on the same platform, an achievement that no other organisation had accomplished. It was something they were proud of and trusted it was an augury of what was coming in the near future'.

Meanwhile in Kerry a team would emerge out of the conflict composed of players from across its ideological divide like Sheehy, Barrett and Brosnan. Their unprecedented national success over the next ten years made them one of the most iconic and influential sides in GAA history. But their status lay not simply in their footballing brilliance. Many celebrated

them as the embodiment of the role Gaelic games could play in helping to heal the societal wounds left behind by the bitterness of Ireland's Cogadh na gCarad - 'war of friends'.

(Composed of IRA members, Republican activists, Free State supporters, and serving Army and Garda personal, the post-Civil War Kerry team became one of the most successful in GAA history. Between 1925 and 1933 they won ten Munster titles, six All-Irelands - including Kerry's first four in a row - and four National Leagues. They conducted three high-profile tours of the United States in 1927, 1931 and 1933 and captured two Railway Cups for Munster in 1927 and 1931. They went on to set a record of thirty-four consecutive competitive games unbeaten in all competitions between October 1928 and March 1933)

Dr Richard McElligott is Lecturer in Modern and Irish History at Dundalk Institute of Technology. He is a member of the GAA's History and Commemorations Committee and author of Forging a Kingdom: The GAA in Kerry, 1884-1834.



THE BALLYSEEDY MINE EXPLOSION MEMORIAL.



Football

Hurling

Club

General

MÍLE BUÍOCHAS

Thank you to all of those who have contributed to this month's edition of the GAA Club Newsletter. Your feedback is welcome and any comments, suggestions or queries should be directed to **clubnewsletter@gaa.ie**.

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